



# Fitchburg Public Library

## Safe Child Policy

The staff of the Fitchburg Public Library strives to create a warm and inviting environment for children of all ages to encourage a love of books, reading, and learning. The Library offers many programs and services that encourage children in this endeavor.

The safety and well-being of children at the Library is a matter of serious concern. Because it's a public building, the Library is open to all people—and therefore it can never be considered a completely safe place to leave children unattended. Parents must be aware that responsibility for children using Library facilities, materials, and equipment rests at all times with the parent or caregiver and NOT the Library staff. To assure the safety and supervision of all children who use the Library, the Board of Trustees sets the following standards for the supervision of children in the building.

- All children under the age of 10 must be accompanied, and continually supervised, by a parent or caregiver while in the Library and its outdoor spaces.

Supervised means accompanied by a parent or a parent's representative who is ensuring that:

- The child's behavior does not present a safety hazard to the child, other users, or Library property.
- The child acts in accordance with Library rules.
- The child's behavior does not interfere with the use of the Library by others.

A Caregiver is another adult or teenager (15 years or older) who has been designated by a parent to ensure that his or her child is safe and acting in accordance with Library rules.

For children's safety, any child three and under must be within the immediate reach of their parent or caregiver, and any child ages 4-9 must be within the parent or caregivers' line of sight.

- Parents or caregivers, and not Library staff, are responsible for the actions and safety of children visiting the Library.
- Parents or caregivers must stay in the Library building while their child under the age of 10 is attending a Library-sponsored program. Parents or caregivers are responsible for escorting the child to the program and meeting the child at the conclusion of the program.
- At the discretion of the parent or caregiver, a child age 10 or older may be left unattended for no more than two hours. The child must know how to reach the parent or caregiver in case of an emergency. Children will be expected to display appropriate behavior, conducive to maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in the Library for all patrons.
- The parent or caregiver is responsible for ensuring the appropriate behavior of their child(ren) in the Library. Disruptive behavior, such as shouting, running, pushing, or other loud or physical activities, will not be tolerated. Children who continue to be disruptive will be asked to leave the building. In the case of an unaccompanied child between the ages of 10 and 12 years old, an attempt will be made to contact a parent or caregiver to pick them up. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached, the Fitchburg Police Department may be contacted at the discretion of Library staff. The parent or caregiver is liable for all damage done by their children to the Library facility or equipment.
- The Library cannot assume responsibility for children while a parent or caregiver is using the Internet or participating in a Library program or other activity in the Library.



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- Computer use is not intended by children ages 5 or under. It is the responsibility of a parent or caregiver to ensure appropriate use of computers by young children.
- Children ages 12 and under left at closing: Children should be picked up 30 minutes prior to closing time. If a child has been left at the Library at closing time, every attempt will be made to contact a family member or caregiver. Staff are not permitted to remain after hours with an unattended child, nor give the child a ride home or to any other location. If a family member or caregiver cannot be reached, the Fitchburg Police will be called to escort the child home or to keep the child until parents can be reached. Two staff members will remain with the child until the police have arrived. The Library Director will be informed whenever this action becomes necessary and will contact the child's parent or caregiver to explain the Library policy and why the action was required. Please be aware that staff are unable to monitor whether children are leaving with authorized caregivers.
- The Children's Room and the services provided are reserved for children from birth through age 12 and their parents or caregivers, teachers, and those using the collection. At their discretion, library staff may ask an adult not accompanied by a child to move to another area of the library.
- Children's bathrooms are for use by children and their parents or caregivers only. Doors may be kept locked for security.